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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 4852
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001079

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST CHAIRMAN OPTIMISTIC ON PEACE PROCESS

REF: A. STATE 119813

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 0999

[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 0984

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Randy W. Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b /d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Maoists remain committed to the peace process and are "trying their best" to work with other parties, according to Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda). In response to ref A demarche points, Prachanda told Charge that other parties, supported by India, are blocking progress, not the Maoists. Prachanda optimistically predicted that the three main parties will soon announce a "high-level political mechanism" and agreement on permanently ending the blockade of parliament, and promised that the Maoists will unilaterally discharge the 4,008 disqualified former combatants "within two weeks." End Summary.

Maoists Committed to Peace Process

[1](#)2. (C) During a November 24 meeting at Prachanda's downtown Kathmandu residence, Charge expressed U.S. concern about the ongoing political stalemate in Nepal. Per ref A instructions, Charge urged the Maoists to demonstrate maximum flexibility in reaching a political agreement with other parties. Prachanda said he was "very optimistic" that the political parties would soon create a "high-level political mechanism" to move the peace process forward, as well as find a "middle way" to address the President's "unconstitutional action" reversing the dismissal of then-Chief of the Army Staff Katawal.

[1](#)3. (C) Asked about his meeting with G.P. Koirala in Singapore, Prachanda said the two agreed to form the high-level political mechanism to spur action on the peace process, but not/not to replace the current government. Koirala told Prachanda that other Nepali Congress leaders did not support the deal, which is why Koirala distanced himself from Prachanda during recent public comments. (Comment: This is consistent with other reporting and raises questions about the ailing Koirala's control over the party and his ability to deliver on the high-level political mechanism. End Comment.)

We're Flexible, They're Not

14. (C) Citing the decision to allow the budget to pass November 24, Prachanda said the Maoists are "trying their best" to show flexibility. He blamed the other parties for undermining the peace process, such as the recent statements by Defense Minister Bhandari about renegotiating key elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Prachanda also said that forces "linked to New Delhi" are "not comfortable" with the current constitution drafting process, given the Maoists' plurality in the Constituent Assembly, and are floating the idea of working outside the CA to finalize the new constitution, a proposal the Maoists strongly reject.

Promises of Peaceful Protests

15. (C) Charge acknowledged that the recent Maoist protests (ref B) were largely peaceful, but said that the announced general strike, planned for late December, would only hurt innocent Nepali people, whom the Maoists purport to represent. Prachanda said that there was a "real possibility" that the parties could reach consensus before the planned general strike. The Maoists take seriously the "credibility of their party" and any Maoist protests would remain "constructive and peaceful."

Discharge of Disqualified Within Two Weeks

16. (C) Prachanda promised that the Maoists will unilaterally discharge the 4,008 disqualified combatants, many of whom are minors, "within two weeks." The Maoists welcome UNDP funding for the process, such as vocational training, but the party is prepared to send the former combatants home to their

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villages with or without UN support. The Maoist commanders are meeting November 24 to finalize plans for the discharge process. Charge indicated that responsible discharge of the disqualified would be a positive and welcome step.

Suspicion of India, Welcome U.S. Engagement

17. (C) According to Prachanda, the Government of India's role in Nepal is not as helpful as it could be. The Maoists want good relations with New Delhi and are trying to "clarify" their party's position, but have been disappointed by India's reaction. It is an "open secret" that New Delhi has close ties to the leadership in the Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (UML).

18. (C) Prachanda reiterated his party's desire to have a "good relationship" with the United States and welcomed continuing contacts at multiple levels. As head of international affairs, Krishna Bahadur Mahara should remain the Embassy's main point of contact. Charge said that the United States hoped to continue dialogue on the steps necessary to remove the Maoists from the U.S. terrorist lists, which includes addressing conflict-era human rights cases, but indicated that Maoist action was required to move the dialogue forward.

Expanded UNMIN Mandate

19. (C) Asked about the future of UNMIN, Prachanda said its mandate should be extended for at least six months. "Without the UN, we can't bring the peace process to its logical conclusion." Prachanda also suggested that UNMIN's mandate should be "upgraded" to include political issues.

Comment

110. (C) Despite Prachanda's upbeat assessment, we remain skeptical about the Maoist commitment to the peace process. The party has repeatedly promised to discharge the disqualified former combatants, but always finds an excuse to delay action. We suspect the Maoists will keep most, if not all, their combatants in cantonments until they control government and are confident about the outcome of the army

integration plan and new constitution. The much-hyped, G.P. Koirala/Prachanda-led "high-level political mechanism," even if created, will not by itself resolve the core peace process issues, on which the parties remain deeply divided.

BERRY